

# **Archbishop Paul Martin SM Installation Mass Homily**

**St Teresa's Pro Cathedral, Karori, 11am Saturday 17 June 2023**

When we chose this day for the Installation it was a blessed bonus that it happened to occur on this feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Yesterday we celebrated in the Church the Sacred Heart of Jesus, focusing on the love of Jesus for us all and today we focus on Mary's love. This is a feast that grew out of the faith of the people of God, emerging in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and over the centuries it has had a number of different iterations and days to be celebrated. It was only in 1969 that Pope Paul VI moved the feast to this day, the Saturday following the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

One of the gifts of this feast is that it invites us to ponder the interior life of Mary, the mother of God. What goes on in her heart reflects who she is as a daughter of God and her closeness to her creator. Traditionally it has invited Christian people to think of the joys and sorrows that she experienced and underwent, to think of her virtues and what God had done for her through them. It also focused on her love – firstly for God the father, and then her maternal love for her Son, Jesus and finally her motherly love and compassion for all of humanity.

What lies at the heart of all of this is the love of her heart for Jesus and for God, out of which flowed all the rest of her actions and works. And it is this that I think we all need to draw upon for our own lives of faith. We have the prayers and help of Our Lady in our living of the Christian life, but even more so we have the same opportunity to deepen our own love of Jesus her Son, and God the father and the

Holy Spirit who dwells in us. We see this par excellence in Mary, but it isn't just admiring from a distance, like some inspirational figure, it is the opportunity to take on those same virtues, to live in the same way, to follow God as she did, with her prayers and support along the way. Would that we did because the fruits of that would be extraordinary, not just for ourselves but for others too.

The scripture readings for today describe this clearly. In the prophesy from Isaiah we see that God's people will be those that God has blessed. And not only that but in response to that their souls will rejoice in the God who blesses. He gives them the garment of salvation, wraps them in the cloak of saving justice. And being wrapped in that they then bear fruit of justice and praise which is visible to all the nations. The fulfilment of this prophesy comes about in the coming of Christ and is witnessed to by the life of Mary. This same way of living is what is promised to us too. Jesus' coming, freeing us from the burden of sin by his death on the cross and the gift of himself and the Holy Spirit, mean we too can become holy men and women. And being holy isn't about being passive and doe eyed. It is vital and real, it is about joy but also acknowledging that there will be trials and difficulties. These are all part of a life lived with God.

And that is very clearly demonstrated in the Gospel. There were Mary and Joseph mad with worry when Jesus disappeared, it was a very human moment and a reminder that this was a real life they were living, with all the aspects we experience in life. And then Jesus tells them of his mission, but they didn't understand. I find this consoling as I am sure we have all experienced in our lives moments when we

haven't understood what God has been asking of us, or what has been said to us.

But notice what Mary does, she stored all these things in her heart. This immaculate heart that we honour on this day stored all the experiences of God's interaction with her, those of her Son, those of being his disciple, and the fruits of that are shared with us in love. It is why we recognize the mana and the dignity of this women of faith, the perfect disciple of Jesus her Son.

The second reading is not from the feast today. It was one that I chose for my ordination as a priest 29 years ago and it has been the basis of what I have tried to live my life by. Now I am not saying that it has been overly successful, but it does capture again what we are called to do and be as Christians, namely to allow the power of God to live in our hearts, so that we may be filled with the utter fullness of God. I know for myself so often I limit that, whether by my fears, my lack of trust, my desire to control things myself, and in doing so I become so much less than what I was created to be. And God desires so much to fill me, to fill you, with his life and love and power and strength and grace. It comes out of complete and total love for us. What if we really allowed that to happen....what a world we would have. St Paul also praises God when he says 'glory be to him whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.' This is God's work we are doing, he gives us what we need and it will be so much more than we would think or expect or demand. So often we limit ourselves, but God doesn't do that, he wants all people to know his love for them, and they will hear that when we, who have received this love, are able to show that to others.

That is what we see in Mary, a living example of what looks like. A woman of deep love too for God and for us. I do feel blessed to be taking up this calling as Archbishop of Wellington on this day, under the mantle of the immaculate heart of Mary, as I begin this vocation of service to the Church of the Archdiocese of Wellington. My hope is that through this I will grow in my own holiness and closeness to God along with all the people who I have the privilege of serving. May we together bask in the love of God and the prayers and support of his mother for us all, so that we will indeed have the fullness of God living in each one of us.